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Latvia Academic Career Framework – Virtual Study Visit to Finland

Summary of Presentations and Q/A Discussions

December 15 and 17, 2020

Tuesday, December 15

1. *Historical introduction into Finnish higher education* (Professor Jussi Välimaa, Director, Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä)

The presentation provided an introduction to the main historical traditions of Finnish higher education and society; the geo-political context since 12th century; the role of universities as unifying instrument throughout the country's history; changes in the education system since the 1960s; the establishment of polytechnics in the 1990s; the state of the art in Finnish higher education today (statistics and legislation); socio-cultural context of Finnish HE; steering of HE; and trends and traditions.

University Act 2009: Universities became separated from the State although they continue to receive funding. Strong power of the rector (CEO). University board includes 60% internal members, the civil servant status of professors is ended. All individuals have a work contract with the university rather than the State. Academic freedom is secured in the state constitution and statutes of universities. Two accountability mechanisms: national monitoring system and performance based funding (database is public); FINEEC aimed at enhancement.

Observations: The importance of equality, society's trust in higher education; internationalization for the Finnish HE system; academic titles dating back several hundred years; the connection of HE to the civil service (until 2009); the importance of scientific quality; continuity of policies and gradual reform strategy: big social changes are started as pilot experiments; if successful, they are scaled up. The current education system allows for individuals to be admitted to universities from any steps beyond compulsory education. The strength of the system is that there are no dead ends. Lifelong learning is a core principle which allows for adapting to new economic realities.

2. *The Reform of Annual Working Time in Finnish higher education* (Professor Jussi Välimaa, Director, Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä)

The presentation covered the following topics:

- Starting points for the reform in the 1980s (teaching as the basis for salary, defined as weekly contact teaching hours, was identified as the main challenge); regulations preventing pedagogical innovations and development.
- The reform of annual working time - AWT Reform (1988-1998):
 - Academic work was no longer defined as teaching hour but as annual working time: 1600 hours/year which equated the annual working time of civil servants.
 - Average was not defined in the contract; so some people could do more or less but it was an instrument to allocate time across the three missions in the dept. The allocation would allow an examination of resources available and whether they were allocated well.
- The context of reforms:
 - Mistrust had arisen from a reform in 1970 that was too top down. So the annual working time reform was bottom-up + evaluation to feed into policy development at a time when funding was increased by 10%.
 - Opponents: unnecessary reform, opposed by prof union
 - Promoters: MEC, ministry of finance, student union
- During the pilot:
 - Academics realized that the reform supported new cooperation and improved planning:
 - Teaching hours were reduced by 10% during the 1st year.
 - 95% of academics in the two pilot HEIs supported the reform
 - Lecturers were accepted as members in research community
 - New teaching method and cooperation increased
 - Disciplinary differences: science accepted the reforms but not social sciences and humanities

Experimentation lasted about 10 years and was gradually accepted (after debates). Perceived as a rational way to plan academic work. It was fully implemented in 1998 in universities and in 2004 in UAS. Now, working time is 1612 hours. There are agreed categories to allocate your time: research, teaching, third mission, university service, etc...

Lessons learnt about how to implement reform:

- The way reforms are implemented is as important as the reform itself. No top-down
- Follow-up study helps to moderate tensions between different actors to continuously improve the reform
- Take into account the disciplinary differences
- The economic crisis in 1990: the reform helped to survive the crisis.

Q&A Discussion:

Q: Regarding the language of instruction, how was it introduced it? Were there discussions on using English vs. the national language?

A: There was always an international dimension in Finnish universities. These universities always aimed to be international, including in research activities. Since the 1990s, many international programs were

developed in English. Many universities also advertise international positions through open calls. However, we don't have many international students, 5000-7000, and the number of international academics has been stable.

Q: In Latvia many people disagree with teaching in English, they want to protect Latvian language. Did you ever have such discussions in Finland?

A: We had these discussions, but more importantly English is the language of publication and government has supported international publishing at the cost of using the Finnish language. In terms of teaching, it is accepted that we have international programs where the language of instruction is English. These programs do not compete with national programs which are in two official languages: Finnish and Swedish.

Q: Regarding 1600 average hours, is this for planning purposes and calculating basic salary? Does the actual amount have to match this number exactly?

A: Yes. It is a planning instrument, not a description of what we actually do. It also helps to balance the teaching load in the department.

Q: About performance funding for universities, how is it calculated?

A: There is a funding formula (explained in later presentations). The formula includes, for example: the number of bachelor and master degrees produced; external funding obtained; and publications, among other factors. This formula covers the basic funding for an institution, and about 25 percent includes specific criteria for each institution. Finnish academic unions and universities think that performance-based funding is too strongly present in the funding model and the share of stable basic funding is too low.

Q: Do you have performance contracts with your academic personnel? Do they affect the construction of workload of individuals?

A: The salary system is based on two things: how demanding is your work and how well you perform. It is very difficult to change your salary because it is zero sum game within a university. In principle, the system rewards performance. In practice, it's not that clear.

Q: Do you integrate the work of your research institutes with universities in, for example, master or doctoral studies? Also, how is your collaboration with the industry? Industrial PhDs?

A: There are national sectoral research institutes and institutes within universities. The goal is to establish good cooperation between national research centers and universities. We don't have industrial PhDs, but there are debates on how we can support the transfer of PhDs from universities to industry. One of the innovations in Finnish universities are professors of practice, they come from industry. They do not follow traditional academic criteria but integrate practical experience as well.

Q: How are professors evaluated in practice?

A: There is an instrument that allocates one's actual work in hours across different projects in which one participates. Then, project-funding covers one's salary based on the number of hours worked. This is important especially for external projects. This approach is also used for teaching hours and administration.

Q: Regarding balancing research and teaching, we saw in the example of professor X that many more hours are devoted to research. Who is then doing all the necessary teaching at bachelor and master levels? Lecturers and instructors? Do they only do pedagogical work? Is younger staff doing most of teaching? Can they grow professionally?

A: It is different within different departments, the balance between research and teaching is different. It is not necessarily the case that younger academics do more teaching. Doctoral students and post docs have different portfolios than lecturers. Lecturers are doing most of the teaching and they have to fight for the right to do research. Postdocs do a combination of both, but more research. The new tenured associate professors do most research, and universities save money by not having to pay tenured full professors. 70 percent of new professors are tenure-track associate professors.

Q: What about exit strategies for academic staff?

A: Seventy percent of academic staff are on fixed-term contracts, which is perceived to be a problem. Exit strategies are unplanned, random and unfair.

Q: What about full-time vs. part-time employment?

A: Majority of contracts are full-time, they are the norm. But usually academics can decide whether they want to work full-time or part-time.

Q: Regarding the transition from the old to the new system in Finland, how does a person now become a professor?

A: First, there has to be an open position, and there is a limited number of professor chairs in the system. The other thing is that you have to publish constantly. You also have to have a bit of luck, need to convince the university that you are both promising and productive. Tenure-track is aiming to make the process of becoming a professor more predictable.

Q: So, the university decides on this? In Latvia there is a council of professors that elects the new professor.

A: There is a committee that selects external evaluators, 2-3, Finnish and international. They evaluate the quality of candidates. Then the committee makes a proposal to faculty council, then they decide on the best candidate, and then the Rector usually accepts the decision and nominates the professor.

Q: Does a university decide how many professor chairs there will be?

A: Yes, but only when a professor leaves the university or retires then the resources for appointing a new chair are allocated by the rector to any department or field. However, typically a position will be in the same field.

Q: Is there a post-tenure? How long can professors stay in their position?

A: There are three categories of retirement: a time when you can retire, target time when you should retire, and the time you must retire. The retirement has been pushed further. Jussi must retire by the age of 68 and Elias at 69.2.

3. Recommendation on good practices or tenure track and major challenges (Raija Pyykkö, Finnish Union of University Professors)

The presentation covered academic titles in Finland; basic statistics on tenure-track positions; various institutional tenure-track models; regulations concerning professors' recruitments; merits considered in recruitment procedures; how tenure track changes professorship and professors' work; and employment contracts.

Observations: The balance between merits and potential – when evaluating “potential” in the tenure-track system there might be some cultural differences and considerations. Issues regarding fixed-term or permanent contracts – in Finland, the challenging part is having permanent contracts, while in Latvia is the other way around, there are contextual differences.

Q&A Discussion:

Q: There is no national coordination for tenure-track. Is that intentional?

A: Aalto university first adopted it from the U.S., and other universities followed. Lots of variety of implementation although the English titles are the same. No national coordination concerning tenure track although there are universities act, universities statutes, HR regulations, etc. We asked the Ministry about the status of Assistant and Associate Professors, they replied that Jussi Valimaa's research group will deal with that issue. I don't think that it is good that there is no national coordination.

The issue comes from the legislature on professorships, the position needs to be openly announced, and that is not the case with promotions to higher level within the tenure-track system. So, there is a need for national regulation; there is too much diversity with unintended consequences.

Q: Regarding competition for the professor vacancies, are all universities equally open to international competitions? Or some universities are more oriented toward local labor market?

A: Those universities in the capital have better chances of attracting international faculty and University of Eastern Finland has also been successful in this. It is also easier to do it in international fields of study (such as arctic studies). But the discourse around tenure-track is international, most positions are advertised internationally.

Q: Is there any risk that tenure-track system may hinder the renewal of academic staff? Meaning that younger staff can have difficulties entering the system.

A: It is actually the opposite, it is easier for younger academics to enter the system than for those that are already in the system, for example lecturers, because the younger scholars can prepare for it. Universities prefer young academics with research potential.

Q: You mentioned that a number of full professors has decreased recently, do you see that as a problem? Or is it just a function of the career transition?

A: We see it as a problem, tenured professors concentrate primarily on research, so it is important to have them.

Q: In Latvia research institutes and universities are very flexible in changing the number of employed professors and most of the funding comes from projects. If there are many projects, new positions can

be opened. With the tenure system the national funding will not increase, so the number of positions will be limited. Do you think that tenure-track would be better for Latvia than the current system, which is very flexible?

A: Maybe it would be good to think some more about it, we are still learning about that system. There are pros and cons.

Thursday, December 17

4. On Higher Education and Science Policy in Finland: Steering aspects and Statistics, including Career Framework (Councilor Paavo-Petri Ahonen, Ministry of Education and Culture)

The presentation included the description of the structure, responsibilities, and work performed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, Department of Higher Education and Science Policy; HE, research and science system in Finland; long-term aims of the Finnish HE and Research policy; information on steering of higher education and research institutes in Finland (including HE funding models), description of the Vipunen.fi statistics portal and data it contains; and a description of the four-step Career Framework – the idea of integration and labor mobility.

Q&A Discussion:

Q: Do the agreement negotiations use the results of the quality audits conducted by FINEEC?

A: That is included in the data used for determining funding level/amount. Quality and impact are the goal of performance funding.

Universities decide internally how they distribute funds. How much autonomy universities have with regard to agreement funding? That is one of the big questions.

Q: Aims of the system: Quality, internationalization, impact, equality and equity, agenda for skills and competences. How is the funding model supporting these goals?

A: Lump-sum funding gives freedom to universities to do many things. However, it can be debated if it gives them tools to support skills and competencies. Universities are also competing among each other.

Q: On the collecting date of academic staff in Finland: how and what data are collected and analyzed? What data are publicly reflected? In what principles is this reflection based on? What are the tools – the technical solution – how are these data reflected or visualised? Are there laws governing the collection and presentation of these data?

Also, do you collect data on salaries of staff? Additional employment of staff, e.g. part-time in a company or another education institution?

A: Yes, we collect it, but salaries are not public. Employment data is also collected, but it is not very detailed.

Q: Who is collecting these data? In Latvia it is the tax office, but others collect it too.

In Finland universities report to the Ministry and we put it in the Vipunen data base. Data on staff are available in Vipunen, but not detailed. Sometimes we commission special reports, data is collected for those and some conclusions are then presented.

Q: Do you have an external research assessment? If yes, does that impact a funding for a certain university?

A: Indicators are impacting the funding, but not external assessments. (Note: the universities are required to do assessment exercises by law under their autonomy)

Q: Is there something like register of academic personnel?

A: No, we ask universities for such information.

Q: Measuring outputs is an important part of the funding model. How does Finland ensure that institutions are able to be innovative and take risks, for instance in research?

A: It's a trade-off of several things. Science is a very competitive field, but the research funding model is not forward looking. But there are also quality indicators that are included there.

Q: Is there some data on career stage continuity? What is the proportion of Stage 2 (PostDocs) that go to Stage 3 (Independent) and to Stage 4 (Professors)?

A: Yes, we have a lot of data on that. The situation is different across different universities. In some universities there are pyramids, in others 1 and 4 are smaller, and career stage number 3 is large. However, there is no promise to move to the next stage, it is a competitive system.

Q: How exactly in the funding model are the funding for the % of, for example, Master graduates, calculated? Is it 14% of the total funding that is then distributed to universities proportionally to the graduates?

A: Yes, it's a straight- forward technical model.

Q: Can best professors obtain the status of professor emeritus after reaching the age of mandatory retirement?

A: Universities decide on that, it does not come from Ministry funding. There are many emeritus professors. (Note: the emeritus status is typically a non-salaried title, that provides for instance right to use universities' resources such as databases etc.)

Q: Tenure track in Finland was implemented in a variety of ways, what is the view of the Ministry in retrospective? Should anything have be done differently? Should there be more convergence? What about diversity? Advice for Latvia?

A: The view of the Ministry is very neutral. Aalto University is using that model the most.

Aalto is very committed to diversity. The model is constantly developing, and we try to improve it.

On the system level there are differences and varieties, they are dealing with these issues in the process of collecting bargaining. Recently there has been more convergence.

With regard to advice to Latvia: We encourage tenure but it is not an easy path, people have different expectations. But Aalto is happy with it, positive experience.

Q: Should there be national framework and legislation for tenure-track and promotion, or should it be left to universities?

A: Ministry: Now it is up to institutions, we haven't discussed that.

Aalto: we appreciate that, it speaks to the autonomy of universities, to be able to decide on the personnel matters.

University of Eastern Finland: There is a problem of the temporary nature of associate professorship, it has to do with legislation.

Q: Regarding the transfer of staff from one institution to the other, how difficult it becomes when every institution deals with tenure in their own way?

A: There are not many differences between HE institutions, and even between research institutes. But moving between academia and industry is a different story.

5. Career models and Human Resource Management in Universities (Professor Jouni Kekäle, University of Eastern Finland)

The presentation covered HR processes and practices (including human motivation, recruitment, diversity & inclusion, and career models as leadership structures); changing expectations for HE in recent history; and international examples of career models - including legislative and national differences.

Q&A Discussion:

Q: Regarding support to departments and schools in recruitment, can you give more examples of what have you done in that area?

A: We are dealing with the implementation strategy, it has to do with academic leaders and researchers. We try to get to know them, see what cooperation with them looks like.

Everything goes back to individual decisions in the end, decisions happen in the committees and meetings. And often those individuals [academics] don't have any competencies for HR management.

Regarding international recruitment: the lack of prior relationship and cooperation with the candidates is a problem. Therefore, to combat inbreeding, the university encourages faculty to cultivate relationships with international prospects in order to increase the pool of potential candidates to a position.

Q: Is there then an invitational procedure, if there is prior cooperation with a candidate?

A: Yes, that makes it easier, also for candidates - so they know what to expect.

Comment about diversity: There is not much diversity in Finnish universities, they are very homogenous. We discuss this a lot. But not all diversity is good, it can be harmful if a person goes against the strategy of the department.

Q: What about polytechnics, what is a general difference between career models there and in universities?

A: It is a different system, it is not based on research merits, it is more teaching focused, more structured. Funding structure is similar, although smaller part is awarded for research.

6. Career models in Universities: The UEF (Professor Jouni Kekäle, University of Eastern Finland)

The presentation covered the brief overview of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF); HR plan and recruitment model; the four-stage career model; tenure track implemented in 2011; salary system with specific criteria and job demand levels; and career model for teachers implemented in 2018.

Q: What are the principles for determining salary? Do the same level academic staff working in different faculties have very different salaries within the same university?

A: The principles come from the collective bargaining agreement – related to level of work [job complexity], and personal aspect (?) [individual merits, e.g. productivity?]

Q: What are the requirements for professors and associate prof.?

A: Criteria are stated in the legislation, but not for tenure track-positions, those are decided by universities. There are some criteria in internal institutional documents.

Q: Are requirements mostly quantitative?

A: Yes. But there is movement towards the idea that not (only) quantitative metrics (not meant for assessment of individuals) should be used in assessments. [So, assessments should be based on qualitative indicators, quality of individual's work] External funding is very important, also the number of high-quality research articles.

Q: Are qualitative processes clashing with quantitative processes of the Ministry?

A: Yes, sometimes they are contradictory, we cannot use JUFO as a formal criterion. Academy of Finland even stated they will deny you to put your JUFO rankings numbers.

It is also difficult because JUFO rankings are used for evaluating, for example, doctoral dissertations. However, these metrics are meant to be used for decisions on university funding.

7. Aalto University - Shaping the future (Dr. Erja Ämmälähti, Aalto University)

The presentation covered basic statistics related to the Aalto University; description of their tenure-track system; evaluation criteria for promotion and tenure; time allocation for different missions of the university (research, teaching and service); the impact of tenure-track system on research performance and productivity; description of the lecturer career model and other academic positions; and alignment of the university career systems aligned with strategic objectives of the institution.

Observation: In Aalto, the tenure-track system has increased diversity, not the opposite as some people think.

Q: Aalto periodically evaluates the rigor and the impact of the tenure process. Can you explain a bit more?

A: We believe in the constant development of the system. We are seeking constant feedback from people recruited and employed, and we also interview those who are leaving and ask what we could do better.

Q: What are the language requirements for international applicants?

A: Main language at Aalto is English, school departments can decide who will teach in which language. By law we need to also provide teaching in Finnish and Swedish.

Q: What is the share of international academic staff?

A: One third of professors are international. Even more students.

Q: What are the criteria to evaluate independent work that you mentioned?

A: You need to present a research plan, and publications need to reflect that you can publish independently, your own ideas, that you have your own network.